

# The Gazette

## *Inspiration for your career*

SPECIAL EDITION



## Striving for a better, fairer world

Do you want to pursue this goal in your professional life? Whatever your academic background, there are opportunities for you, in Switzerland and abroad.

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### Your first steps in international cooperation

Should you start with an internship, a traineeship or a junior programme? Our coach's advice: before you apply, try to understand what you will be learning!

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### Drive your career choices with the Sustainable Development Goals

A simple way to map out your career ambitions: start by defining which SDGs you want to contribute to through your work.

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### Vittoria made it! Your turn now

Vittoria Groh looks back on her first work experience in the field, with the United Nations. Apply for next year – there is room for 30 young Swiss graduates!

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### Working in international cooperation: not always as you imagine

Not sure whether you are cut out for working in international cooperation? Find answers by comparing yourself with these clichés.

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# 7 valuable tips for growing your career

Experienced professionals and HR experts give advice to those of you considering a career in international cooperation. Take advantage of their tips!

**Jan Imhof**  
Research Officer, IFC (World Bank Group)

Distinguish yourself from the masses: when applying, emphasise your interest in the position and the value you will bring.



**Sandra Witschi**  
HR Development, FDFA

Think about the (strategic) level you want to work at, identify the most appropriate employers.



**Julien Pellaux**  
Strategic Planning Adviser, UN Women

The more exposure and experience you gain at the beginning of your career, the more it will pay off later: be flexible and open-minded.



**Isabel Bangerter-Mamerow**  
HR Manager, Swiss Red Cross

Stick at it and don't lose courage. If you keep trying, you will find your way in!



**Manuela Häfeli & Kathrin Indermaur**  
Co-Heads HR, Helvetas

Many believe that their skills are the only determining factor in their career. But personal values and attitudes are often more important in determining how far you get.



**Eva Mennel**  
HR Director, UNICEF

Enjoy what you do, bring passion to the job every day, do not count the hours, and you will be successful.



**Mark Hawkes**  
HR Marketing Comm. Advisor, Medair

Identify your calling and chase it – if you have a drive you cannot ignore, persevere in the training or experience required to get to where you want to go.



# Internship or junior programme? What else?

Internships and co. give you the opportunity to gain work experience in international cooperation. But how do they differ? Our coach, Beat, gives some answers.

## What should I look for?

Beat Geiser: It depends on your situation. In general, internships are intended for students or graduates with very little or no experience. Traineeships and junior programmes often require at least some initial work experience. However, there is no universal definition and not all organisations use these terms the same way.

## What to pay attention to when looking for an internship?

Not all internships have the same value! For instance, look out for differences in being actively involved in projects or performing administrative tasks. Try to understand what you will be learning: will it be at the level of tasks, or a topic, or will you be getting to know the functioning of a type of organisation? All of them can be valuable.

## Does a traineeship open the door to a job in the same organisation?

Unlike other sectors, this is often not the case in international cooperation. Traineeships are a practical way to gain further work experience and develop your competencies. The overarching goal is your retention not in the organisation but in the sector.

## What about junior programmes?

Programmes are the realm of large organisations. They are more structured, including selection criteria (e.g. rigid age limits). In some cases, retention is part of the objectives. Programmes are often highly competitive, with exceptions for specific profiles, like finance or human resources.

**Beat Geiser** is Advisor and Trainer at **cinfo**.



# Find your way with the SDGs!

For the very first time, sustainable development, peace promotion and the fight against poverty are on the same agenda – all thanks to the Sustainable Development Goals!

Also called SDGs, they make up the new framework for international cooperation. All states are called upon equally to play their part in reaching them by 2030. Only states? No. The various organisations active in this field are looking to contribute to a number of SDGs.

Therefore, choosing an employer and a job means prioritising some SDGs over others. As a job seeker, ask yourself: "Which SDGs am I interested in tackling?"

**Five more essential questions** Finding your way in international cooperation is not so simple, how-

ever. There are other questions to consider as well.

Go to **cinfo.ch/findmyway**, a short guide which helps you answer the following questions:

- In which professional fields can I contribute?
- Which employers do I have the most affinity with?
- What field am I most interested in?
- Which modes of intervention do I feel most comfortable with?
- At what level can I imagine my contribution?

# Tools you will love



## Start your job search today

Where to find a job in humanitarian aid, international development, relief work, human rights or peacebuilding? On [cinfoPoste](http://cinfoPoste.ch), of course!

Each year, more than 180 organisations advertise their vacancies, both in Switzerland and abroad.

And they seek a broad range of profiles, from economics to education, HR to health, communication to construction.

Visit [cinfoPoste.ch](http://cinfoPoste.ch), create a profile and upload your CV.

## Which training course is right for you?

You cannot avoid doing further education if you want to keep abreast of the constant developments and new requirements in international cooperation.

However, given the many courses available, it can be difficult to find one that fits your career goals.

cinfo's training portal helps you compare educational opportunities in international cooperation. Select the topics in which you want to develop your knowledge and skills:

[cinfo.ch/edu-offer-search](http://cinfo.ch/edu-offer-search)



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## Meet the people behind the organisations

This tool does more than just give you an overview of the organisations active in the Swiss labour market of international cooperation.

You can also find testimonials from numerous professionals – a source of inspiration for your own career.

[cinfo.ch/panorama](http://cinfo.ch/panorama)



# “The richest experience I have ever had”

Vittoria spent one year in the field abroad as part of the UN Youth Volunteers Programme. She talks us through some of her most memorable moments.

### What was your assignment?

Vittoria Groh: I was working in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as an SDG Outreach and Advocacy Officer in the Office of the Resident Coordinator.

### Can you remember an exciting situation you experienced during your assignment?

I worked with the Haitian Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation to create a country specific model

**“The programme leaves you transformed for the better”**

that would allow for the prioritisation of a certain number of SDG targets. When the Director of the Ministry presented it to the Prime Minister and other stakeholders, it was accepted with enthusiasm; and Haiti has now prioritised 40 SDG targets.

### And a challenging situation?

As the year went by, with the departure of some of my colleagues, I took over different roles, sometimes with a sharp increase in responsibilities. It was challenging, but it also gave me many opportunities to learn and develop a certain self-assurance in the work I was doing.

### An anecdote you would like to share with us?

I bought a car there as public transport was not a viable option. My friends called it ‘Rainbow Warrior’, after one of Greenpeace’s ships, as it broke down countless times, often in the most surreal situations. I now know the essentials of mechanics

and have lived through unforgettable moments I would never have come close to without those small frustrations.

### Would you recommend the programme to Swiss graduates?

Definitely. This year was one of the richest professional and personal experiences I have ever had. Not only does it allow you to gain United Nations field experience, it also gives you the opportunity to dive deeply into another culture, requiring you to adapt to situations that are often very far from your every day reality, and step out of your comfort zone to discover new sides of yourself. It is a programme that leaves you transformed, for the better.

### What advice would you give to someone who wants to apply?

Choose your country carefully because it will be your home for 12 months. The work you will do is certainly important, but the job description will probably change throughout the year, also often shaped by your skills and interests.

### Where are you working now?

I am about to start a JPO position with OCHA in Geneva, and I am very excited about it!

Are you Swiss, under 29 years old and hold a Master's degree?

Like Vittoria, lay the foundation for your career in international cooperation with the **UN Youth Volunteers Programme:**

[cinfo.ch/unyv](http://cinfo.ch/unyv)

# Good to know

Which organisations offer junior positions or junior programmes? Below are some examples.

Learn more on [cinfo.ch/findmyway](http://cinfo.ch/findmyway)

**CARITAS** Schweiz Suisse Svizzera Svizra

**HELVETAS** Swiss Intercooperation

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**MEDAIR**

**mission 21**  
evangelisches missionswerk basel

Swiss Red Cross

**UN VOLUNTEERS**

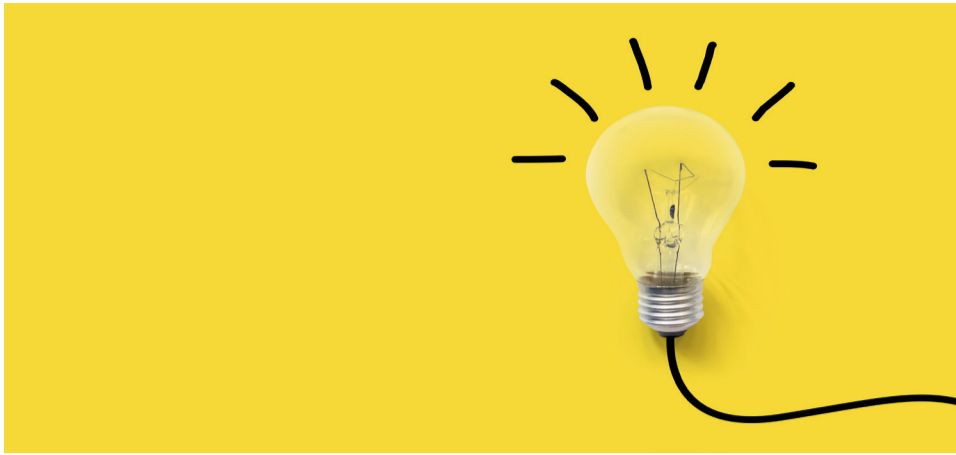
in partnership with:

**unicef**  
for every child

**UN WOMEN**

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... and more!



## 5 clichés you should be aware of

Not sure how to get started on pursuing your interest in a career in international cooperation? Here are some clichés about working in this field.



**“I am going into international cooperation because I want my work to have meaning.”**

You are looking for a job that gives you the feeling of being useful and making a positive contribution. And so you think international cooperation will suit you. It is worthy of your efforts. But does a job only make sense when you can help your neighbour?

At the risk of disappointing you, the answer is no. Finding meaning in work is something we all have in common. An ice-cream seller can find their work rewarding because their delicious goodies bring a glow to children’s faces. A garbage collector can consider their job very useful because without it the city streets would be littered with garbage.

Conversely, a programme manager for social justice in Niger might not be able to recognise meaning in their work because it consists of being behind a computer screen and writing numerous reports.



**“I want to be able to have a direct impact in my work.”**

You can imagine working in international cooperation because it is one of the few areas where you can actually see the fruits of your labour. You are inspired by employers such as UNICEF (“For every child, results”), the World Food Programme (“Zero Hunger”) and others.

We readily acknowledge that organisations working in international cooperation strive towards goals that are remarkable and should never be doubted. The same goes for their activities.

However, it is worth differentiating between the impact at the level of the organisation, which may employ 100 or even 1000 people, and the impact at the personal level. In other words, working for UNICEF does not necessarily mean that your work and its impact can systematically be seen. You must be aware of this when applying to avoid being disappointed later.

**“I’m neither an engineer nor a doctor ... and so international cooperation is not for me.”**

Having told yourself that you lack the skills to build infrastructure or improve the health situation in the countries that most need it, you are moving away from the idea of international cooperation. But do you know that this field is not limited to these professions?

The truth is that employers are looking for a diverse range of profiles, from economics and finance to law, HR and social sciences.

Last year, logistics and construction accounted for only 3% of the advertised vacancies on cinfoPoste. And only 6% were for positions in health and medicine – although this figure reflects the reality that humanitarian organisations often recruit staff without advertising.

**“I want to work in this field and so I’ll look for an NGO.”**

Of course, NGOs are important actors. However, they are not alone in supporting people in need and promoting global economic, social and cultural development.

Apart from the federal government, which is active primarily through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the UN actors and international financial institutions play a central role with regard to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. You should also be aware that foundations and other private actors are increasingly influential.

When you are planning your career in international cooperation, and looking for a potential employer, think about the variety of organisations!



**“Now that I’ve finished my studies, I’m looking for a permanent position.”**

With your master’s in hand, you are ready to put into practice all the knowledge you have acquired during the long years of study.

The only thing missing is a permanent position in an organisation. As they say you are talented, you will surely not have to wait long for this famous position.

Slow down! In many fields finding a fixed position without having done an internship is the exception. Arguably, it is even worse in international cooperation. Finding your path resembles a labyrinth in which you have to be proactive, flexible and show perseverance. The good news is that the possibilities to develop your career do exist.

Publisher:



On behalf of the Swiss Confederation, we provide HR solutions for those who take action for the SDGs\* internationally, and those who want to. We connect individuals with organisations.

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**Ask us!**

Just send your question to

[info@cinfo.ch](mailto:info@cinfo.ch)

\*Sustainable Development Goals: a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Still motivated after ploughing through these various clichés?

Well done! For the next step, we recommend that you participate in a **Reflection Day** organised by cinfo. If you are more advanced in your plans, **Career Advice** could be what you need.

[cinfo.ch/career](http://cinfo.ch/career)